

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3003
By: Parker
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In response to the rising unemployment rate during the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been calls to reskill and upskill the workforce, put Texans back to work in high-demand occupations, and accelerate the Texas economic recovery. Support for public junior colleges and public state colleges, in collaboration with the Texas Workforce Commission and private employers, in providing workforce credentials may help ensure that workers are equipped with the skills and credentials needed to fill high-demand industry needs. C.S.H.B. 3003 seeks to address this issue by establishing the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education Program to provide eligible colleges with grants to support and maintain activities that promote workforce learning and providing for the identification of workforce credentials valued in high-demand occupations.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3003 amends the Education Code to establish the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education Program for the stated purpose of strengthening the Texas workforce and building a stronger Texas economy. The bill requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to administer the program in accordance with the bill's provisions. The bill requires the THECB to award grants under the program, beginning with the 2021 fall semester and using funds appropriated or otherwise available for that purpose, to eligible institutions or consortiums of eligible institutions for creating, redesigning, or expanding workforce training programs and delivering education and workforce training that lead to postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials required for high-demand occupations. The bill defines "eligible institution" as a public junior college or public state college. The bill requires the THECB, to the greatest extent practicable, to award grants to at least one eligible institution in each region of the state and authorizes the THECB to give preference to applicants that represent a consortium of eligible institutions or prioritize training to displaced workers.

C.S.H.B. 3003 limits the uses of a program grant to the support and maintenance of educational and general activities that promote workforce learning at the institution or a member institution, as applicable, including the following activities relating to postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials:

- providing training in existing, new, or redesigned accelerated programs that teach high-demand skills and lead to those certifications or credentials valued in growing occupations;
- developing new industry-aligned, high-demand certifications or credentials and certificate programs or other courses of instruction leading to those certifications or credentials that can be completed in six months or less;
- redesigning existing certifications or credentials and certificate programs or other courses of instruction leading to those certifications or credentials; and
- expanding institutional capacity to provide high-demand certifications or credentials that are stackable in high-demand career pathways and address the needs of high-demand occupations identified by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) or applicable local workforce development boards.

The bill authorizes a grant recipient to hold money received under the grant program that is not used by the institution or a member institution, as applicable, in that fiscal year and use the money in subsequent fiscal years for the purposes outlined by the bill.

C.S.H.B. 3003 requires the THECB, in collaboration with eligible institutions, the TWC, and private employers, to identify existing and develop new postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials valued in high-demand occupations. The bill requires the THECB, in consultation with eligible institutions, to identify the certifications or credentials developed or redesigned using program grant funds and establish methods for collecting and reporting data related to those certifications or credentials.

C.S.H.B. 3003 authorizes a grant recipient to recommend outcomes related to the achievement or development of identified postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials to be considered by the THECB for inclusion in Texas' long-range master plan for higher education. The bill requires the THECB to consider the achievement or development of identified workforce credentials in devising funding formulas and making recommendations to the legislature relating to institutional appropriations of funds for eligible institutions.

C.S.H.B. 3003 authorizes the THECB to solicit, accept, and spend grants, gifts, and donations from any public or private source for the purposes of the program. The bill requires the THECB to adopt rules for the administration of the program, including rules requiring grant recipients to report necessary information to the THECB.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 3003 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute changes the entities to which the bill applies from public junior colleges, as it appeared in the original, to eligible institutions, defined by the bill as public junior colleges and public state colleges, or consortiums of eligible institutions.

The substitute changes the year the THECB must begin to award grants from the 2022 fall semester, as required in the original, to the 2021 fall semester.

The substitute includes provisions not in the original specifying the purpose of the grant program with respect to strengthening the Texas workforce and building a stronger Texas economy, requiring the THECB to award grants to at least one eligible institution in each region of the state, and authorizing the THECB to give preference to certain applicants.

The substitute includes the following provisions not contained in the original relating to the authorized uses of a program grant:

- a provision including delivering education and workforce training that leads to certain workforce credentials among the purposes of appropriated grant funds established in the original;
- a provision that includes providing training in existing programs that teach high-demand skills and lead to postsecondary industry certifications among the activities for which a program grant may be used;
- a provision specifying that new certifications or workforce credentials and certificate programs or other courses of instruction developed through a program grant must be able to be completed in six months or less;
- a provision that includes redesigning existing certifications or credentials and certificate programs or other courses of instruction among the authorized uses of a program grant; and
- a provision changing an authorized use from expanding institutional capacity to provide certifications or credentials for target occupations included on regional or statewide target occupations lists established by appropriate workforce agencies to expanding institution capacity to provide certifications or credentials that are stackable in identified high-demand occupations.

The substitute does not include a provision in the original specifying that training supported or maintained through a program grant must teach skills and lead to certifications or credentials valued in growing occupations that pay a living wage.

The substitute changes a requirement in the original from requiring the THECB, in collaboration with specified entities, to identify new high-demand skills needed to earn postsecondary industry certification or other workforce credentials valued in high-demand occupations as in the original to instead requiring the THECB, in collaboration with those entities, to identify existing and develop new postsecondary industry certifications or credentials valued in high-demand occupations.